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ABSTRACT

This study briefly reviews the findings of Scandinavian research on children and television in the socialization process. Viewing habits of children, their social situations, and the breakdown of various viewer groups are explored. The interactive nature of television programs that seek active responses from children are discussed, as well as television's influences on the child's norms and values, mostly in regard to program preferences expressed by this group. Research relating to educational programming is further explored. An extensive reference list to Scandinavian resources on television research, and a subject index to the report are included. (RAO)

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CHILDREN AND TELEVISION IN THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

Some results of Scandinavian research

Cecilia v Feilitzen

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Table of contents page

Introduction 1

The television viewing habits of Swedish children 1

The child's development 3

The child's social situation 3

Different groups of children 7

The influence of television on the child's actions 8

The influence of television on the child's norms and values 11

The influence of television on the child's knowledge 15

Summary and discussion 22

References 26

Index 34

This study[1] briefly presents a picture of Scandinavian research on children and television in the socialization process, i.e. the process whereby an individual learns to think, feel and act as expected of him by his environment. The summary shows, among other things, that this research is much neglected. In accordance with Western traditions of mass communication research, the effects of TV have usually been focussed in a short-term perspective and in isolation from the interplay with other individuals, groups and mass media. Family research, school research, etc. for their part, are often marred by similar shortcomings. Particularly, the mass media have been ignored here. In a book published in 1969 which lays claim to encyclopedic coverage of what the Western World knows about
(Ref.) the socialization process, reference to the mass media gets less than one
101. page out of a total of nearly 1,200.

Since mass communication research has lacked an over-all view - and there are also other reasons -, the knowledge we have on children and TV in the socialization process is not only fragmentary but also distorted. It has devoted disproportionate intellectual effort, time and money to selected domains of study and totally excluded others. The whole thing becomes a jigsaw puzzle in which most of the pieces are missing.

The television viewing habits of Swedish children

In Sweden, as in other Western countries, television is the mass medium children use most. A rough breakdown of Swedish children's viewing habits at different ages also reveals many other similarities with the viewing patterns in these countries:

A majority of Swedish children start watching TV with some measure of attention at around age 3. Even younger children may watch television now and then, but their interest in what they see is fleeting. Having developed their powers of concentration, the great majority of pre-schoolers (aged 3 to 6) watch TV daily, and hardly any watch less than 3 days a week. Pre-
21,48. schoolers watch TV an average total of one-and-one-half hours a day.

The amount of television viewing then increases, reaching a peak among 12-year-olds. Since this peak on the curve is rounded, one may say that
58,91. 10-14 year-olds are the heaviest TV-consumers. In Sweden this period of intensive viewing implies roughly 14 viewing-hours per week. Television viewing declines rapidly during the teen years, and not until adulthood does any greater interest in television reappear. But no adult age group
94b. watches TV as much as 10-14 year-olds.

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1) The English version of the study was earlier presented at the Prix Jeunesse International Seminar on "Television and Processes of Socialization within the Family", Spitzingsee, Federal Republic of

What, then, do Swedish children watch? It is commonly, but mistakenly, believed that children only watch children's programmes. It is true that Swedish 3-6 year-olds watch "their own" programmes most, and like them best. But they frequently watch and like many adult programmes as well. It has been found, for example, that three-fourths of all Swedish pre-schoolers watched a popular Western series, and half of them were regular viewers. The absolute majority watched the programme with great interest, enthusiasm or enthusiasm mixed with fright. Sometimes pre-schoolers also watch the evening TV-news, although much more sporadically and with decidedly cooler interest.

21,48, 58.

From about age 8 onwards, however, children begin to develop a more genuine interest in various adult programmes, while they still view programmes intended for their age group. But the main attractions are now entertainment variety shows, comedies, family-series, feature films, detective series, spy-thrillers, Westerns, and the like. On the other hand, children avoid news and informative programming for adults, a tendency that became particularly apparent when Sweden's second TV-channel was introduced in 1969. The children then acquired - and exploited - the opportunity to select and tack between the preferred programmes. - Children in these age groups also watch television late in the evenings. After 9.30 p.m., for example, 9-14 year-olds watch just as much as adults.

49,58, 92,97

Such data have been collected in most countries where research on the individual and mass media has been conducted, and as noted above, children's viewing patterns are quite similar throughout the Western world. There are, of course, certain cultural differences. The fact, for example, that Swedish children in the ages 10-14 watch approximately 14 hours of TV a week, while children of the same age in the U.S. watch more than twice as much, is due partly to the circumstance that, with the exception of one hour's children's programming in the afternoons, (-6 p.m.)/ Swedish television is on the air almost exclusively during evening-hours. American television, meanwhile, is on the air morning, noon and night. But the basic similarities between the mass media systems and mass media outputs in the West are more striking than the differences. It is interesting to note, for example, that roughly half of all Swedish programming consists of imported material, primarily from Western Europe and the United States.

The main question underlying the collection of data on children's TV-viewing habits has concerned the possible consequences this viewing may have. And here it has proved more difficult to provide any clear answers.

Germany, June 22-25, 1975, and at the Second Congress of Scandinavian Media Researchers, Bjerringbro, Denmark, August 16-19, 1975.

The structure and content of television play a decisive role. But it has also been established that the consequences depend largely upon what the child brings with him to television, that is, the characteristics of the child even before he watches, such as sex, age, socio-economic status,
23,28. experiences, interests, living habits, other mass media activities, etc. Before proceeding to discuss the influence of television in the socialization process, we shall turn to some such characteristics that have proved to be essential in explaining children's use of television.

The child's development

As indicated above, age influences children's TV-viewing. Age may be said generally to reflect the child's level of development, and this is obviously important with respect to how the child perceives and comprehends various television programmes. Generally speaking, we are able to observe that certain "critical" ages with respect to the development of television viewing coincide with certain "critical" ages in, for example, the cognitive development of the child: Age 8, when the child begins to generate a more genuine interest in various "light" adult programming is also the age at which the child, according to Piaget i.a., leaves the "pre-
100. operational stage", which is characterized by ego-centrism, among other things. At this point the child enters into the "stage of concrete operations" and is now able to shift between his own view and those of others. This change thus facilitates, among other things, an identification with programmes in which older children and adults act heroically in one way or
26. another. - Age 12, at which television viewing reaches its peak, is also the age at which children enter the "stage of formal operations", i.e. when the child's thinking begins to resemble adult thinking as regards the
100. ability to abstract, solve problems, etc. That the child has previously avoided news and informative programmes for adults to a greater extent than adults, would thus appear to be due partly to the degree of difficulty involved in these programmes.

The child's social situation

But age is not only a measure or indicator of child development; it also tells us something about the child's social situation. Most pre-schoolers spend most of their time within the family circle. And the television viewing habits of the parents have a very strong - primarily indirect - influence on the child's viewing habits.

Of course, the child does have a will of his own. Nearly all pre-school children at one time or another switch on the set themselves to watch a programme. A slight majority also keep track of the broadcast-time of one or another programme (children's or adult). According to parents, a majority of the pre-school children sometimes also balk at going to bed
21,58, when bed-time coincide with an entertainment programme, a detective story
68. or the like.

And, of course, an influence of playmates can also be traced in pre-schoolers TV-viewing habits. Quite a number of parents, albeit a minority, have noticed that 3-6 year-olds sometimes want to watch a programme because "Everybody else gets to watch..." or "Johnny gets to watch...".
21,24, Among most 5-6 year-olds a status-motive for watching TV has also
28. developed: "I want to know as much as other people".

And, of course, most parents at one time or another forbid their children to watch TV. The motive is partly to protect the child from frightening experiences and the like, partly to keep him from coming into contact with
8,21. phenomena disapproved of within the family.

But regardless of the child's own will, regardless of the peer-group influences, and regardless of the parental censorship, data indicate that during the average week the pre-schooler watches twice as much television due to external impulses as he watches on his own initiative. And these impulses are often of an indirect nature, such as "Mama was
58. watching..." or "Everyone was sitting there ...", or the like. Several other studies, too, show that parents' example is one of the strongest factors explaining children's viewing habits. The more one's parents watch TV, the more the child watches. The more positive parents'
8,21, attitude toward TV, the more the child watches. And the more parents
59,68. feel they derive from TV-viewing, the more the child watches. In other words, the child learns that the programmes are attractive by observing the rest of the family's behaviour.

However, it should be noted that this applies primarily to pre-school children's interest in adult programming. The situation is quite another with regard to children's programmes. In this latter case most parents
58. consciously encourage their children's viewing. The receiver situation with respect to adult and children's programming also differs radically. While children almost always view adult programmes in the company of
58. their parents, one finds only 5-10% of pre-school children's parents

39. viewing a week-day afternoon children's programme. But parents nevertheless find the time-slots appropriate, and they are generally very positive toward the content of children's programmes. One must conclude that parents
21,39, want their children occupied because they themselves are busy with other
84. tasks. Thus, children's programmes are children's programmes in more than
17,68, one sense of the word: Pre-schoolers view them in the company of their
i.a. sisters and brothers and sometimes their play-mates. Or else quite alone.

Parents seem to have great faith not only in children's programmes but in other types of programming as well. When parents from time to time forbid their children's viewing a certain programme, their censorship is more often based on the programme's time-slot or on press or television announcements of the unsuitability of the programme than on their own
8,21. judgement. When interviewing parents, very few question what is shown on TV. Indeed, this is true of adults in general. A study spanning over several months found but an average 2% of the daily audience who were
42. annoyed by any programme they had watched.

Up to now our discussion of the child's social situation has only concerned the influence of family members and playmates on pre-schoolers' TV-viewing. We have done so intentionally. Most children and their parents
58. only seldom watch television in the homes of friends and relatives. While quite a number of Swedish children attend nursery school - among
17. the 6-year-olds more than three-fourths - they are only there a few hours each day, and only roughly one-tenth of these schools are equipped with
18. TV-sets. Some children, but rather few, spend their week-days in the
17. care of another family, but there the TV-situation would seem to be quite
15,17, similar to that of the child in his own home. The only social group that
21. may be a significant exception in this context are the day-care centers. Most of these all-day nursery-schools in Sweden are equipped with television, and most children do watch the children's programmes broadcast while they are there. The personnel are usually the ones to switch on
15. the set, and they watch the programmes together with the children. But here it must be noted that only 10-15% of all Swedish children attend
17. day-care centers. Furthermore, only roughly one-fourth of the personnel usually follow up the programmes with any related activities. Most confine themselves to commenting on programme content in response to
15. children's questions. Might it be that also the personnel in the day-care centers mainly use TV to give themselves a little peace and quiet?

It would seem that parents are parents, and others are others, and never the twain shall meet. Both parents and day-care centre personnel gather their information about children's programmes mainly from the daily press, and hardly ever are they influenced by the opinions of
15,21. other adults.

While pre-schoolers' TV-viewing occurs largely within the bounds of what the family sanctions, the situation is quite another among school-aged youngsters. Only about half the parents of children aged 11 years and
62. older supervise or keep track of their children's viewing. Conflicts over which channel to watch sometimes occur, mainly between fathers
70. and their children, but on the whole these seem quite infrequent, as even if school-children watch more entertainment programming and less news and informative programmes than adults, parents' and children's
50. programme preferences are nevertheless quite similar. It would appear that children of these ages still view children's programmes without
92. their parent's company.

Instead, school-aged children's direct programme choices are guided
5,9, primarily by two other factors. First, the child consults the newspaper
19,44, to see what is on. Secondly, he is influenced by others of the same age,
58. who almost exclusively give tips about entertaining adult programmes. TV's status conferring function among friends and class-mates has grown since the pre-school ages and does not decline again until age 12, when
24,28. television viewing is past its peak.

Other socialization agents of great direct/ importance for children's television viewing are hard to find. It is striking how little influence the school, as an institution, has in this context. As yet the Swedish curriculum offers no systematic study of the mass media. It appears that teachers
44. seldom recommend any programmes to the children. And since teacher and pupils neither seem to discuss programmes they have watched to any
58. greater extent, one may perhaps conclude that television content most often is considered irrelevant to the classroom. School-TV is an exception, of course, but these programmes, broadcast during school-time, are specially produced to fit the curriculum.

Like adults, children seem to have great faith in television. If 11-year-olds learn about the same event via TV, parents, teachers and newspapers, most children lend greatest credence to TV. TV is considered best in-
44. formed, and you can see for yourself what is happening.

Different groups of children

To sum up: By sketching the development and social situation of the child, albeit in broad strokes, we have gained some idea as to why children's television viewing increases up to a peak at age 12, and why children of various ages choose differently between children's and adult programming. At the same time we have gained some idea of how television itself ties into the socialization process: The child learns to watch since parents and playmates accept the medium. By direct encouragement or by observing his or her models, the child internalizes these norms and values so that they also are reflected in the child's own will.

But, the picture of children's television viewing sketched up to now is true of the statistically average child. In order to understand television's influence, we must also consider that children do differ.

The physical or mental/emotional development of many children deviates from that of "most children". Scandinavian studies of the viewing
38,54, behaviour of these children are quite sparse, however. Primarily this
76,79. research has paid attention to the deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

Also, children encounter different norms and values and gain different
14,21, experiences because they belong to different groups in society. We know,
43,52, for example, that children of parents of low socio-economic status watch
68,96. more television than children of parents with a higher social position.
14,21, This is even more true of the parents themselves. Researchers have some-
68. times noted that children of low socio-economic status watch a greater amount of violent content. But other research results show, that these
14,44, children rather see more of all sorts of content, children's programmes
53,59. as well as both informative and entertaining adult programmes. This finding also corresponds with the fact that adults with varying amounts of education, i.e. high and low TV-consumers, choose to watch the same programmes. Thus, little educated adults watch not only more programmes of so-called "mass appeal", but - contrary to popular belief, it appears -
50. more informative programmes as well.

The children's programmes are an exception, however, as neither little educated nor more educated parents seem to watch these programmes too much.

A third important factor is that some children have problems with their contacts with parents, class- or playmates, or the school. Such problems

3,6, 9,86. often lead to aggression, depressions or anxiety on the part of the child. These children, too, watch more television than other children. And 3,41, 86. at least certain types of personal problems are related to a greater interest in violent TV content.

Children watch television primarily to get entertainment, with information 24,28. as a secondary motive. Many adults have thus claimed that children's comprehensive television viewing and their decided preference for entertainment-type programmes, comics, films, etc., above all reflect escapism. But, in the case of television, this does not correspond with children's own perceptions. Far more important for children is that television satisfies various social needs. Children watch television because they identify and because they get to be sort of friends with some of the people on the screen, because it is a habit and because they talk about the programmes with other people, because TV implies status and social involvement. For a smaller group of children TV-viewing further offers an opportunity to be with others in the viewing situation itself, that they feel calm and secure, that they feel they are doing something worthwhile, and that they need not be alone. Thus, it seems that children watch television partly because it means a social relationship per se. Partly, it seems that television provides children with information about their social environment or information that they can use in their social environment, that is to say, children watch television also in order to improve their real social contacts. One should keep in mind that mass communication - although in the main a one-way process - is a form of communication, i.e. an interaction between two or more persons. Thus, one may well wonder whether the social functions of the mass media are not 24,28. in fact the most fundamental of all.

These things, among others, should be kept in mind when considering the influence of television in the socialization process.

The influence of television on the child's actions

TV doubtless frequently exerts influence on the activities of pre-school children. A number of Scandinavian studies have investigated the reactions of younger children to children's programmes of an informative, activating nature. Many of these programmes invite children to do various things 16,32, while they watch, say, to guess something, to draw circles and triangles 72,i.a. in the air, or to feel their bellies expand and contract as they breathe.

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Whether or not the children respond to these suggestions and succeed in doing what is suggested depends, of course, on the nature of the activity. More than two thirds of the 3-5 year-olds watching programmes on the lives of pigs and sheep followed the programme host's suggestion that
29. they wave, say oink-oink and say baa-baa. In another programme, an experimental one, children in the audience were asked to clap their hands, stamp their feet and say pr-r-r in a given rhythm. None of the 5-6 year-olds in the study were able to learn the routine, despite
77. repeated rehearsals.

Even if the programme does not feature any direct invitations to do something, pre-school children are often spontaneously active during the programme, provided the subject and programme format are somewhat attractive. Children "talk" with their bodies, scold characters on the
4,36, screen and comment on or ask questions about the programme content.
39,56, Important to note, however, is that these studies were made when children
71.i.a. watched TV in groups at day-care centers or libraries, or at home when the child watched TV in the company of a familiar adult. Whether the lone pre-school viewer reacts differently, we do not know.

4,8, Then, what happens after the programme is over? As far as researchers,
16,21, day-care center personnel and the parents can judge, quite a number of
37,58, children, but still usually a minority, do or - more frequently - say
71,72, something that seems to have been inspired by the programme. Such
73,74, activities or comments are usually noted the same day or a day or so
78,i.a. after the child watched the programme. We know little about TV's possible <u>latent</u> after-effects, of course.

Single children's programmes are seldom seen to have any lasting impressions on children's manifest behaviour, however. The same seems true of children's <u>series</u>, in which the children have an average interest. But if their interest in the series is rapt and intensive, a cumulative
21,39, and/or long-term influence have been noted. Thus, popular adult series
67. have sometimes generated such long-term consequences.

A study in which mothers were asked to tell generally which programmes had influenced their children's play and behaviour, found that children had been influenced by adult programmes as often as by children's programmes. The adult programmes mentioned were most often entertainment-type programmes, detective stories and Westerns. The children played

cowboys, played with guns or got into fistfights, or acted tough like
58. a certain agent.

As noted above, children learn both from instruction, rewarding-punishing etc. and from identifying with, imitating and in other ways copying models./ This can thus give rise to both intended and unintended effects of children's and adult programming.

But the older the child, the less frequently one can trace direct influences on his actions. For example, a programme series of several weeks, intended for 7-12 year-olds, aimed to stimulate contacts and cooperation between Swedish and immigrant children. The programmes were made like detective stories and the idea was that viewers of different nationalities would work together to solve various mysteries during the intervals between the series segments. Quite many of the school-children who watched the series talked about it, but practically none had taken contact with children of other nationalities. A minority tried to figure out the solution to some mystery, but almost all of these had speculated
34,94. entirely on their own.

When asked whether anything they have seen on TV during the past month has inspired them to do something, school-children mention activities like handicrafts, reading a book, playing, play-acting, sports, buying something or watching more TV. But only few children are aware of any
19,31. such inspiration from TV-viewing.

No Scandinavian study has found evidence that relates television viewing to increasing crime rates. Researchers do believe, however, that
10,27, violence on television can provide a model of behaviour and under certain
41,46, circumstances can sometimes serve to stimulate aggressive behaviour on
59,i.a. the part of the child.

That the influence of television on older children's actions is hard to trace hardly means that TV does not play a role here any longer. But whereas the pre-schooler more often express himself in body language and is active in order to learn expected behaviours, the school-aged child instead has internalized much knowledge, norms and values, which tell him how to behave. And TV has also played its part in a complex interplay between parents, play- and classmates, the school and other agents in the socialization process.

The influence of television on the child's norms and values

Television influences viewing children's frame of mind. They can be amused and laugh, they can become excited, they can become sad and depressed, they can be frightened and filled with anxiety, they can become angry and
6,12. aggressive. Positive experiences are of course most common - otherwise children would not watch. Nearly every Swedish child between the ages of 3 and 15 say they watch television because the programmes are fun and
28,49. exciting. Children express greater liking of programmes than adults do.

But it is a common misconception that younger children are not at all selective as regards programmes intended for them. Research findings indicate that pre-school children, too, have definite programme preferences. They are most interested in entertaining children's and adult
14,33. programming of conventional format. In informative, activating children's
14,29, programmes, where the emphasis is not explicitly on entertainment, pre-
32,73, schoolers are generally "quite" to "very interested". The subject matter
i.a. treated is very important here. For example: Of three programmes of similar format on the cow, the tree, and how a child is born, 3-6 year-
33. olds were most fascinated by the childbirth. Children's interest is often
5,26, heightened when the subject matter relates to the child's own experience,
37,71, and when they are provided with someone or something to identify with. Thus,
78,90. interest may also grow gradually during the course of a series, where the
33,39, plot and characters become increasingly familiar.
90.

Programme format also plays a role. Children viewing two differently designed programmes on, among other things, circles and triangles, laughed during one, while they yawned, became impatient and
36,37. started making mischief during the other. Children can find programmes
16,32, boring not only because picture and sound are complicated and hard to
33,37, understand, but also when the programme for instance is slow-moving and
71,72. overly repetitive. Interest also declines if programme hosts and others
37,71, talk amongst themselves and not to the pre-school viewer.
74.

The children's programming least appreciated by pre-school audiences in
14,30, various studies has been programmes featuring unconventional pictures
60. and sound intended to give the children an aesthetic experience. Children viewing some programmes of partly non-figurative art (Miro' and Chagall) and atonal music gradually lost interest during the course of the programme, they wondered when the children's programme was going to come on,

30. and by the end of the programme half of the audience had left the set. Children are not any more "open" - in Rousseau's sense of the word - to unfamiliar, unconventional forms than adults, but instead require
30,60. training in order to learn to appreciate them.

What, then, do we know about children's less pleasant experiences of television content? When speaking of fright and fear, it is important to note that such feelings can range from wishful excitement to profound fright which may last some time. It turns out that among all programmes, children's programmes are those that have frightened younger children
58. most often, while entertainment-type programmes, detective stories and Westerns have been of only secondary importance in this respect. This is presumably due to the fact that children more easily recognize themselves in children's programmes. For although children sometimes mention being frightened by unfamiliar or inexplicable things, they most often report
8,21, fear when children in a programme have been threatened by an adult or some
29,33, other form of danger, or when an animal finds itself in a similar predica-
35,58, ment. That reality often seems more frightening than fiction is also
89,i.a. reflected in the fact that older children more often report fear with respect to documentary programmes than, say, detective stories
58. and ghost- or horror films.

Few children, however, seem to have suffered severe effects in the form of, for example, anxiety, nightmares or lost sleep from anything they
1,13, have seen on television, and effects over any longer period of time are
19,58. rare. When such influence has been noted, it has mostly been among
1,13, younger children and children who also otherwise are sensitive or
86. neurotic. Paradoxically enough, it also/ appears that children who watch tele-
8,59, vision a lot are as often, if not more often, frightened by what they
86. see as children who watch little television. Differences in the fear-experiences of individual children do not necessarily make themselves known immediately after viewing, but instead may become apparent only after some time. This suggests that it is not so much the intensity of the viewing experience as the child's chances of dealing with the impressions and his feelings that may be decisive for more long-term influence. Viewing in the company of a parent, and thus being able to
13. talk with someone about what one sees, may thus be of crucial importance.

As for aggression in children, researchers have almost exclusively focussed on the possible influences of violent elements in fictional

entertainment programming. Compared to the volume of American research, Scandinavian research on this subject is minute. Neither is the Scandinavian approach to the subject notably different from that of research in other Western countries. We noted earlier that children - according to Scandinavian research - may imitate acts of violence they have seen on TV, and that television may in some cases contribute to increased aggressivity in children. Researchers stress that the children most likely to show increased aggression are those who are insecure, frustrated or aggressive even before their exposure to the film. Children may also be so influenced if their relations with the immediate environment are less than harmonious, if their parents show approval of violence in entertainment and if parents do not discuss the violence in programmes with their children, expressing their disapproval. As with respect to fear-arousal, it would seem that treatment of the content viewed is one of the most important factors in filtering TV's impulses to violence.

10,27, 41,46, 59,i.a.

An increasing number of researchers, however, have also begun to focus on other possible effects of popular, violent television content: Even though we may not all directly become aggressive, might not our viewing gradually lead us to become accustomed to violence, so that we tend to react less and less, therefore accepting violence as an adequate means of solving problems? Neither need it necessarily be violence in itself which stimulates aggression on the part of the viewer. What role, then, may the norms and values expressed in the entertainment programming on the whole play?

10,27, 48,69, i.a.

Scandinavian research on this subject is pitifully underdeveloped. A few studies show that individual TV-programmes or films which have sought to influence viewers' attitudes have also influenced children's attitudes in the short term. Opportunities for identification which cause the child to become emotionally involved may be of crucial importance in this regard. Generally speaking, the studies also suggest that attitudes are more easily altered if they are not so firmly embraced to begin with. If the attitude in question is deeply rooted in the viewer, however, defense mechanisms may emerge so that the original attitude is instead reinforced. Further, verbal comments made prior to viewing have sometimes been found to counteract the influence of the film on attitudes. We may conclude, among other things, that the children most easily influenced are younger children, as well as children who are insecure

40,61. 2,26, 61. 40,64. 40. 40.

and isolated and thus have not by means of parents and other associates made up their mind on the subject at hand. Those children who watch a lot of television are also those who most often identify with persons
20. and happenings in the programmes.

But it is important to underline that the attitude change intended need not occur simply because the child identifies. To take one example: A realistic dramatic film portrayed two boys who mobbed a third. A study was conducted with 12-year-olds, the same age as the boys in the film, in order to find out whether or not the film influenced the children's attitudes toward mobbing in a positive way. Over half the children who watched identified with one or another of the characters in the film, but their attitudes were not affected. It turned out that the viewers tended to identify with the character in whom they recognized themselves; those who identified with the victim of mobbing, for example, reported being teased and harrassed by their playmates more frequently than others. And this had led to a conflict: The children did not especially like the figure they had identified with, and neither did a majority feel they would have done as their object of identification did. Due to this identification conflict, it was difficult for the
2,26. audience to gain any new insights into the issue of mobbing.

Identification sometimes occurs not primarily because the child <u>is similar to</u> someone in the programme, but sooner because he or she <u>wishes to be</u>, say, the hero or heroine. In such cases, conflicts in identification do not arise as easily. If you wish to be someone else, you are usually positively inclined toward that person, and more frequently motivated to feel, think or act in a corresponding way. When, depending on the character of the programme, opportunities for similarity- and wishful identification are provided, it is thus probable that wishful identification more often influences the effects the pro-
26. gramme will have.

Since similarity-identification occurs more frequently when the programme portrays complex reality, and wishful identification more often when the characters and milieu are portrayed in "blacks and whites", television's influence on children's attitudes can in many cases also
26. be unintended consequences of viewing fictional, stereotyped content. Furthermore, there is evidence that children more easily absorb atti-

tudes in a casual, entertainment situation, that is to say, when they
40. regard the programme as entertainment rather than information.

What may this imply in the long run? We know very little, since only a few studies have treated children's norms and values in the long term. Furthermore, these studies only concern school-aged children and teenagers, and mainly what can occur during a limited period of two years. The studies show that TV has inspired a desire for a more active, mobile and urban life-style. Among other things, the desire to change one's place of residence has increased, and the wishes here most often concern towns. Expectations as to future occupations have risen and partly changed in character. Children dream more of glamorous careers as footballers, pilots, pop-singers and film stars instead of, as earlier,
6,65, teachers, tradesmen or store-clerks. The importance of one's appearance
95. and fashion-consciousness are also ideas that have become more widespread.

95. The more television watched, the greater these influences. As might be anticipated, those most influenced also are younger children and children
65,95. whose norms and values are loosely rooted. But two things are important to add: The first is that such changes have nevertheless been noted with respect to nearly all categories of children. The second is that children with loosely rooted norms and values need not necessarily be children whose relationships with parents, friends or the school are problematic. The children showing greatest influence are namely also children in rural areas, i.e. children with least <u>experience</u> of the culture
95. communicated via TV.

One therefore wonder how great the influence of television is on children's knowledge, experience and conceptions.

<u>The influence of television on the child's knowledge</u>

11,14, Numerous Scandinavian studies have verified that children of all ages
36,37, more or less have learned something or recalled information immediately
39,51, after viewing an educational children's programme. For instance, numbers
53,56, and size relationships. Or how to use the telephone, how to behave in
88,i.a. the traffic, and that electric wires in railroad yards are highly dangerous. Of course, children have sometimes been found to have hardly learned a thing from what they saw, but such cases are rare.

The age or level of development of the child are important for learning. As mentioned earlier, it cannot be taken for granted that children will think like adults before age 12. Pre-schoolers, for example, find it difficult to see things from others' or from more than one point of view, and they have a vague concept on time and space. Older children up to age 12 think about actual, concrete situations and do not as older children try out various hypothetical alternative courses of action, consider things relative to one another, or form a comprehensive view of the situation. Also, limited language and experience, among other things, are reasons why children perceive things differently than adults. This, in turn, means for example that children do not always take note of the things that adults consider relevant.

Thus, pre-school children may well learn about the process of breathing and become aware that and how they themselves do breathe. But this is
32. not to say they will realize that all people breathe. Similarly, pre-schoolers often believe that adults either were larger than children when
37. they were born or that they have always been grown-ups. Neither will the pre-schooler most probably understand the difference between a front tooth and a molar, if the TV-programme compares the front tooth to a
71. pair of scissors and the molar to a mortar. Nor is the pre-schooler
4,59, likely to recall the content of the programme in its order of presenta-
68. tion. And since the child cannot always follow the logical train of
81,82. thought in the programme, he easily becomes preoccupied with details.

Thus, the format and composition of the programme plays a role to learning on the part of the viewer. Important features include the
4,5, illustrative clarity of picture and language, their animation and
7,15, tempo; pauses; agreement of sound and picture; amount and type of irre-
45,47, levant content; discontinuities in time and space. Other factors are
60,61, how the subject is presented pedagogically; the context in which an
71,77, event is presented; whether or not the child's attention is focussed on
81,82, the essential message through special emphasis or repetition or by means
83,85, of advance introductions to the subject provided by, say, an on-camera
87. programme announcer. A Finnish researcher compiled an index of such factors and found that educational programmes intended for pre-schoolers
56. failed to satisfy as much as 50% of the criteria.

Of course, the child's development is hardly totally static. To some extent the child learns the idioms of film by exposure to the medium. That is, it seems that children's understanding of a programme increases

39,45, 68. somewhat if they watch more television, if they view programmes in a series or if they view other, similar programmes.

82,i.a. 5,39, 81,82, 85,93. 29. And, in general, programme content is of greater importance than programme format. Like adults, children learn mainly such things as are related to their personal experience and situation, while unfamiliar subjects are more difficult to grasp. In the programmes intended for 3-5 year-olds mentioned above, about pigs and sheep, the children learned best such down-to-earth facts as what the animals eat (potatoes,and grass and leaves, respectively). This was also the items the children found most interesting.

39,56, i.a. 2,26. Children generally do learn better when they are interested and watch programme content with attention. As noted earlier, a stronger emotional reaction to a programme gives rise to stronger and more long-lasting influence on children's activities, norms and values as well. As with respect to activities, norms and values, identification may also play an important role in understanding and recall of information, provided the identification does not lead to any conflict.

11,82, 87. But it should be stressed that the amusing or most familiar features in a programme, which thus often are easily absorbed and recalled, may be irrelevant to the less familiar information which the programme intend to convey. When learning facts, the situation should not be all too emotionally stimulating. If the factual content is presented in the context of for example very funny slapstick or potentially frightening scenes, the learning may be impaired.

87. Programmes intended to teach something may also have other unintended consequences. A programme on nutrition and eating habits, for example, included a wall picture showing the proportion of various nutrients in the human body. The figure on the poster was filled with water from toe to chest, with the rest of the body filled with layers of other elements. This picture failed to communicate its message. The 8-year-olds in the audience got the impression that the human body contains least of "something white around the neck", and they believed that the body contains milk. In another programme, a radio programme, a father answered his little girl's questions on a variety of subjects, such as being fat or ugly, being born and dying. In this case, identification was apparently the source of failure, for although the little girl voiced

all the "wrong" ideas and the father all the "right" ones, what the 4-6-year-olds in the study recalled was most closely related to what the
66. little girl had said.

Programme producers have wondered whether fantasies in which animals are presented in a more or less anthropomorphic Gestalt can cause or reinforce misconceptions on the part of the child audience. Empirical results on this point are somewhat equivocal. 5-6 year-olds who watched a programme featuring a talking cow did not afterwards believe that animals could
72. talk. But children of the same age who watched a programme in which a bear thought out loud did believe that animals were capable of such
89. thoughts. After having seen an entertaining film in which a tame dolphin displayed amazing cleverness and acted hero in a series of adventures (catched villains etc.), both 5-6 year-olds and 8-year-olds felt that the dolphin's behaviour was true-to-life, but they did not extend this
89. belief to apply to other dolphins. It is difficult to draw any general conclusions on the basis of these results, all of which concern learning in the short term.

We know that children enjoy many programmes even though they may not understand everything in them. It is therefore important to find out what the children actually think such programmes are about, whether children's or adult programmes. Scandinavian research on this subject is practically non-existent.

Do children, then, recall information from a programme any greater length of time? Neither do we know very much about this. But in spite of the fact that empirical research has most often investigated active or manifest knowledge, we might venture a guess that individual programmes seldom have any long-term effects among the majority of children. We have, however, identified several factors that make it easier to recall programme content: for example if the programmes are presented in a series, if the subject is engaging, and if the information relates to something familiar.

But the fact that the child's experience is a determinant of his interest, attention, comprehension and absorption of knowledge also implies the following: It seems as though children who know more to begin with learn
36,39. most from the programmes. - It seems that children of parents of higher
14,36, socio-economic status learn most from the programmes. - It seems that
45,53. children, whose parents usually discuss the programmes with them, learn
45. most from the programmes. And the more educated the parents, the more
14. they discuss programmes with their children. As mentioned earlier,

discussion of programme content has also been found to influence children's emotional experiences and possible adoption of norms and values from television. - It also appears that children with more or
36. less harmonious social relationships may learn most from the programmes. This latter assumption is supported by data indicating that emotionally disturbed children, particularly children suffering from depression and anxiety, but also aggressive children, are less cognitively active and
98. have absorbed fewer concepts than more harmonious children.

One particular children's programme, which has taken these circumstances, among other things, as its point of departure, also constitutes an example of programme information which children have recalled over a longer period of time. This is a series of fifteen programmes produced in Sweden and inspired by the American series "Sesame Street", which seeks to provide intellectual stimulation for primarily socially handicapped pre-schoolers. By making the programmes so attractive as to appeal to parents and older children as well, the producers have sought to fulfil certain emotional and social goals, too. Most 3-6 year-olds watched and talked about the programmes. Their interest was great. Other family members viewed the series to a greater extent than is usual for children's programmes. It is not certain that the programmes have most helped unprivileged children. But most children learned something, and some generalized their knowledge to include items not directly teached by the programmes. Those children who viewed most of the series learned most. Roughly two-thirds of the parents had noticed that their child learned something. Parents did not primarily mention learning of hard facts, but rather that the programmes had activated more far-reaching processes within the child, such as stimulating the child's interest in
39. numbers and counting in general.

But, once, again, it should be emphasized, that the various findings as to what children have learned from various educational programmes concern the intended message or information. Thus it is not always right to say that certain children have not learned anything or not understood. It all depends on whether one judges from the perspective of the child or the programme. Two examples: A programme for pre-schoolers intended to portray Ludvig as an independent 5-year-old who took care of himself during the day. A majority of the 5-6 year-olds watching the programme
68. nevertheless believed that someone was there to take care of Ludvig. Then, the by now well-known programme about pigs showed a sow and her

piglets. 3-5 year-olds in the audience wondered: "Where is Papa Pig?
29. Is he at work?"

Also, children from different social milieux have different experiences. Children of parents of lower socio-economic status, for example, may therefore find other information in the programme than the intended more useful. Or, they may seek it and not find it, because programme producers - like researchers - come from a different cultural milieu.

21,39, A few results have emerged that may illustrate this reasoning. The study
96. of the Swedish Sesame Street series, mentioned above, found that children who knew more to begin with, learned most from the factual knowledge taught by the programmes. But with regard to activation in
39. general there was no such difference among the children. - A television campaign intended for children up to 10 years of age and their parents aimed at stimulating interest in books. The campaign included eight screen versions of children's books and at the same time these books were to be bought. Most children watched the programmes. But the fifth out of all children who had got or borrowed the books were, as may be expected, almost only children of parents of high socio-economic status. These children also had started reading books in general after viewing or had asked their parents to read a book aloud more often than other children. However, children of working-class families had more often talked about the programmes and more often invented games with motives
96. from the series. All in all, the same number of children in different social groups seemed inspired in their activities by the programmes - but they used the programmes in different ways.

Children of parents of high socio-economic status often score many points on traditional tests of intelligence. Important to remember in this context is that these children not for sure are more creative than
57. other children. Some results also indicate that emotionally disturbed children are as much creative as children who have fewer interpersonal
98. problems.

What, then, about the influence of television on children's knowledge over a longer period, several years? Here again the investigations are valid almost exclusively for somewhat older children. For example, it has been found that 8-12 year-olds have increased their vocabulary by means of TV. This is not so much a matter of changing the everyday speech they use at home and in school, but rather more of having

learned the meaning of some difficult, foreign, technical and commercial words which TV in particular employs. Those children who have learned
55. the most TV-words appear to come from fairly stimulating milieux.

Further, 7-year-olds' drawings have been inspired by TV in - according to the researchers - a positive direction, i.e. the drawings contained more activities and fantasy objects, more movement, perspective and relevant details than earlier. Here, too, the changes are greatest among children whose environment is rich in stimuli. - However, TV does not seem to inspire the drawings of 9-year-olds. The researchers assume that
55. several years of schooling now have greater importance.

10-14 year-olds have gained knowledge of other countries by means of TV. The family and the school seem to have taught more about neighbouring countries, but the more remote the country the more frequently TV and
6. newspapers have served as sources of information.

As to leading political figures of moment, on the other hand, the children have found out primarily from TV and secondarily from newspapers, whether the politicians be identified with the domestic or international scene. The school seems to be totally insignificant in this context. - Here again it is likely that high-status children have learned
6. the most.

When 11- and 14-year-olds are asked where they get their news from, practically all give first mention to TV. After that, radio and newspapers work out about fairly even. A few mention the school and even fewer their parents, friends and others. The children who get their news both from persons and mass media are more news-oriented than other
5,44. children.

As regards 8-15 year-olds' conceptions of war and peace, finally, the children have taken most of their impressions from the mass media and least from the family. The children's social background does not seem
80. to affect their notions of war and peace.

Summing up these sporadic results, they suggest that TV's influence increases with decreasing influence for the family, companions and the school. That is to say, in the long run children derive perhaps most information from TV about the world they don't meet in practice themselves.

It was mentioned earlier that children have also learned through TV about a more active, mobile and urban life style - about other places to live in, about glamorous occupations, about fashions and personal appearance. These, too, are areas of life that used to be more or less unfamiliar to them. Thus, the information children get from TV is not confined to news or erudition in any sort of traditional sense, but also include acquaintance with people's roles and what it is like to live outside home and school. Also mentioned above was that children primarily watch TV to be entertained and secondarily to be informed. However, both these motives are mentioned to almost the same great extent by the absolute majority of children. Bearing in mind the programme preferences of children, especially somewhat older children, we could therefore perhaps put it this way: Children want information from TV, but preferably presented in an entertaining manner. Probably it is mainly through the entertainment programmes children orient themselves with the adult world. But programmes of more strict informational content may serve this function, too. For example, 11-year-olds do not watch newscasts chiefly in order to keep up with the latest national or international developments. Instead they prefer the weather reports, crimes, accidents and
44. catastrophes.

Summary and discussion

The culture of a society or a group is a set of shared symbols and their definitions. One distinguishes between cultural definitions telling people what to perceive (i.e. how things are; knowledge of facts) and those that tell them how to respond to what they perceive (i.e. which things are proper-improper and pleasurable-painful; norms and values). Knowledge of facts, norms and values in their turn guide the individual's
99. actions. It is in the socialization process that the individual learns the symbols and definitions of culture.

One can therefore say that we have gone through the Scandinavian studies backwards, since we started with actions and ended with knowledge. There are reasons for adopting this procedure. TV often exerts direct influence over pre-schoolers activities; in part because younger children have not internalized so much knowledge, norms and values, in part because they are active - by imitating, for example - in order to learn how to behave. The older the child, the less dramatic the influence of TV seems to be. Even so, TV can exert an indirect influence now, via

children's knowledge, norms and values and due to the interaction with parents, peers, preschool/school, other mass media etc. In other words, the most important domain of study is TV's relative influence on knowledge, norms and values.

Obviously children in all ages acquire a great deal of knowledge from TV. In the first place they learn - both in the short and long term - about what they have experience of and interest in, and which they perceive will be useful to them in their social environment. Social background therefore plays an essential role. But at the same time TV provides, both in entertaining and informative programmes, knowledge of the world outside, a second-hand information which is not based on personal experiences. In large part this is the same world which also lies outside the experience sphere of the family, peers and school, and to some extent the social background therefore seems to be eliminated here.

One is more conscious of that one absorb knowledge from TV than one do norms and values: When 15-16 year-olds were asked in a study to tell generally what TV has meant to them, the vast majority gave first mention to the informative consequences. For example, that they have acquired knowledge and all-round education; that they have found out about and
20. become aware of other people and countries; that the world has shrunk. Nevertheless, it is obvious that children also do take impressions from TV in their norms and values. As was noted earlier, in the short term we hardly know more than that this chiefly applies to children who do not already have some prior attitude, i.e. sometimes all children but especially younger children and children with social problems. Then, too, children are probably more/ receptive on the whole in this respect than adults. In a longer-term perspective, nearly all children seem to internalize norms and values from TV, and therefore the social background also here to some extent seems to lose out in importance. This appears to be bound up with the fact that these norms and values relate to those areas of which one has no direct experience, as neither the family, peers and school have.

So a summarizing assumption is that the child is socialized by the family, peers, the school and TV in partly different areas. Besides, TV can exert influence over "the family's areas" ("the peers' areas", etc.) when TV works in the same direction as the family (etc.) or when the child is in conflict with the family (etc.).

But what is shown on television constitutes, after all, a limited supply of all available facts. For example, content analyses have shown the existence of large "white areas on the map" in the world commented upon
63. in the news programmes. Similarly, we know that many entertainment programmes present a stereotyped picture of people as regards, say,
102. occupational roles, sex roles and minority groups. This fragmentary selection of facts is due not only to insufficient resources and transmission times but also reflects certain norms and values depending on the more or less conscious policy of the producer and the broadcasting organization. Thus, in addition to mirroring the society's culture, TV - by this sorting of reality - also contributes towards defining children's thoughts, evaluations and feelings in a special and restricted manner.

This should be seen in light of the faith that children and adults appear to have in TV, as well as the fact that children and parents do not
8,9, always discuss what they have seen on TV at a greater length - far from
58,68. it. For most children, too, watching at least certain programmes does confer status, since parents and play- and classmates are looking at and liking these same programmes. Besides, a great deal of televiewing is done out of habit.

In our society such things are appreciated as, for example, individual achievement, intellectual ability, independence, and a certain measure of competition, this because the goal of "increased prosperity" requires increased production. Increased production also requires increased consumption. Production and consumption as two central social phenomena are already reflected in children's norms and values: All ages in a representative sample of Swedish 8-15 year-olds most often wished - of thirteen given wishes - that they could buy more things (95%) and
22,25. that they could do better in school (85%). - Then, the emphasis on more consumption in its turn implies that we must not rest content with what we have but that our expectations, be means of an habituation process, constantly keep rising.

TV influences children's conception of reality, especially about people and places they haven't encountered first-hand. At the same time TV sorts this reality in a certain way. And one may then ask oneself whether this way does not mean, among other things, that TV in our

society influences the socialization of those very norms and values which have to do with increased production and consumption. In other words, does TV, by intensifying children's expectations of a more active, urban and "modern" life style, contribute to accelerate this social development?

This remark amount to speculation, of course. Some research results point in this direction, but as we have seen they are very few. Besides, we need to know more about which meanings are embedded in TV's programme output, more about TV's interaction with other mass media and in spite of all also a good deal more about children of varying background. But if that is what things are really like, we are maybe caught up in a vicious circle. For then we can speak about an habituation effect of TV, too, about a blunting of other norms and values which can concern many different areas. Also, we mentioned earlier that children seem to watch TV partly because it means a social relationship per se, partly because they want to improve their real social contacts. But in the longer run things will not work out like that, especially not for those children who watch TV a great deal. For higher and higher expectations do not lead to increased security and self-confidence but rather to perpetual dissatisfaction.

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INDEX with page references

accidents 22

achievement 24-25

actions 1,8-10,13,14,17,20,22-23

activating children's programmes - see Children's programmes

activities - see Actions

actors in the programmes 11,12, 14

adult programmes 2,3,4,6,7,9,12

adults 1,2,3,5,6,7,11,16,22,23,24
adults TV-behaviour 1,2,3,5, 6,7,11,23,24

advance programme information - see Information about programmes

aesthetic children's programmes - see Children's programmes

aggression 8,10,12-13,19

agreement of sound and picture 16

all-round education 23

animals 12,18
programmes about animals - see Children's programmes

animation in programmes 16

anxiety 8,11,12,19

appearance (personal) 15,22

attention to programmes 16,17,18 - see also Interest in programmes/items in programmes

attitudes 13-15,23

blunting 13,25

books 10,20

broadcasting organization 24

broadcast times 2,4,5,6

buy things 10,24

catastrophes 22

channel - see Two-channel system

children in the programmes - see Actors in the programmes

children's programmes 2,4-5,6,7,8-9, 10,11-12,15,16,17-18,19-20
aesthetic programmes 11-12
entertainment programmes 11
informative and/or activating programmes 8-9,11,15,16, 17-18,19-20
programmes about animals 18

clarity of picture and sound 16

cognitive development 3,16,19

comedies 2

comics 8

competition 24

comprehension of programmes/information 3,12,15-20

conceptions 15-25

concrete operations, stage of 3,16

conflicts over which channel to watch 6

consequences of TV-viewing - see Influence of TV

consumption (in society) 24-25

content analyses of programmes 24

context of the event in the programme 16

countries 21,23

creativity 20

crime 10, 22

cultural definitions 22,24

cultural differences and similarities regarding children and mass media 1,2

cultural symbols 22

culture 2,15,20,22,24
definition of culture 22

day-care centers 5,23
TV-behaviour and possession of TV-sets in day-care centers 5

day-care families 5

deaf children 7

defense mechanisms 13

depression 8,11,19

desire to change one's place of residence 15,22

details in programmes 16 - see also Irrelevant information

detective series 2,4,9,12

development, child 3,7,16

discussion about programmes 5,6, 8,9,12,13,18-19,20,24

dissatisfaction 24-25

documentary programmes 12 - see also Informative programmes, News programmes, Children's programmes

drawings 21

education, level of 7,18 - see also Socio-economic status

effects of TV - see Influence of TV

emotionally disturbed children - see Relationships, problematic

emotions - see Feelings

emphasis in programmes 16

encouragement to view TV - see Information about programmes

entertainment children's programmes - see Childrens programmes

entertainment functions of TV 8,11, 15,21

entertainment programmes 2,4,6,7, 9,10,12,13,18,22,23,24 - see also Children's programmes

escapism 8

estimation of programmes 11, 18 - see also Interest in programmes/items in programmes, Programme preferences

exciting programmes 11

expectations 1,10,15,24-25

experience 3,7,11,15-22,23-25

faith in TV 5,6,24

familiar information 11,17,18 - see also Experience

family - see Parents, Sisters and brothers

family research 1

family-series 2

fashion 15,22

fear 2,4,11,12,13,17

feature films 2

feelings 1,11-15,17,18 - see also Norms, Values

fictional programmes 12-13,14

films, cinema 8

formal operations, stage of 3,16

friends - see Peers

fright - see Fear

frustrated children - see Relationships, problematic

functions of TV 8,11,15,22,25

funny programmes/items in programmes 11,17

ghost films 12

habit as a motive for TV-viewing 8,24

habituation 13, 24-25

hard-of-hearing children 7

heavy TV-consumers - see TV-viewing

heroes 3,14

high and low TV-consumers - see TV-viewing

horror films 12

identification 3,8,10,11,12,13,14,17
identification as a motive for TV-viewing 8
similarity identification 12,14
wishful identification 14

imitation 10,13,22

immigrant children 10

imported programmes 2

independence 24

individuality 24

influence of TV 1,2-3,8-25
cumulative 9 - see also Long-term
intended 10,19
latent 9
long-term 9-10,12-15,18-22, 23-25
on the child's actions 8-10, 13,17,20,22-23
on the child's knowledge 15-22,23-25
on the child's norms and values 11-15,17,19, 22-25
reinforcing 13,18
short-term 1,8-10,11-15, 15-20,22-23
unintended 10,14,17-18

information about programmes 4-6,13,16

informative children's programmes - see Children's programmes

informative functions of TV 8,15, 22

informative programmes 2,3,6,7, 12,22,23 - see also Children's programmes

initiative in TV-viewing, the child's own 4-6,7

insecure children - see Relationships, problematic

intellectual ability 24

intelligence tests 20

intended information - see Influence of TV, intended

interest in programmes/items in programmes 1,2,3,4,9, 11-12,16,17,18,23 - see also Programme preferences

interests 3

internalization of knowledge, norms, values 7,10,22

irrelevant information 16,17

isolated children - see Relationships, problematic

keep track of the broadcast time of a programme 4

knowledge 10,15-22,22-25

language 10,16,19,20-21

learning 1,4,7,10,12,15-22,23 - see also Cognitive development
from identification 9
from imitation 9,22
from instruction 7,10
from observation 4,7,10
from other ways of copying models 10
from rewarding-punishing 9

life-style 15,22,25

living habits 3

mass communication (generally) 8

mass communication research (generally) 1,2-3

mass media (other than TV) 1,3,5,6,8, 10,20,21,23,25

minority groups 7,10,24

misunderstanding - see Comprehension of programmes/information

needs - see Functions

news 21,22 - see also News programmes

newspapers 6,21

news programmes 2,3,6,22,24

neurotic children - see Relationships, problematic

nightmares 12

norms 7,11-15,17,19,22-25

nursery schools 5,23
possession of TV-sets in nursery schools 5

occupational roles 24

occupations 15,22

on-camera programme announcer 16

orientation with the adult world 22

parents 3-8,9,10,12,13,14,15,18-19, 20,21,23,24
parents' TV-behaviour 3-8,10,12, 13,18,19,24

pauses in programmes 16

pedagogical presentation of the subject 16

peers 4,5,6,7,10,15,21,23,24,
peers' TV-behaviour 4,5,6,24

people's roles outside home and school 22,23-25

perception of programmes - see Comprehension of programmes/information, Conceptions

personnel in day-care centers 5

Piaget 3,16

playmates - see Peers

plot in the programme 11,14,16

policy of programmes 24

political figures 21

pre-operational stage 3,16

pre-schools - see Day-care centers, Nursery schools

producers 20,24

production (in society) 24-25

programme choice 2,3-8,11-12 - see also Interest i programmes/items in programmes, Programme preferences

programme content (subject) 9, 11,17

programme format 9,11-12,16

programme hosts 9,11

programme preferences 2,6,7,8, 11-12,22 - see also Interest in programmes/ items in programmes, TV-viewing, direction of

programme series 2,9,11,17,18

programmes with animals - see Children's programmes

prohibition on TV-viewing 4,5,6

prosperity 24

radio 21

reactions to programmes - see Influence of TV

reality 12,24-25

reality, conception of 24-25

reality, programmes portraying 14

reality, TV's picture of 24-25

receiver situation 4-5,6,8,9,12

recollection of information 15-22

relationships, problematic 7-8, 12,13, 13-14,15,19,20,23

relatives 5

relevant information 16

repetition in programmes 9,11,16

rewarding-punishing - see Learning

rural areas 15

school 6,7,10,15,20-21,23,24, TV-behaviour in school 6

school research 1

school-TV 6

second-hand information 21-25

security 25

selection of facts in the programme output 24

selectivity - see Programme choice

self-confidence 25

sensitive children - see Relationships, problematic

series of programmes - see Programme series

Sesame street 19,20

sex 3

sex roles 24

similarity identification - see Identification

sisters and brothers 5,19 sisters' and brothers' TV-behaviour 5,19

sleep, lost 12

social development 24-25

social functions of TV 4,6,8,24,25

social situation /milieu/ background 3-6,7,15,17,18-22,23,25 - see also Relationships, problematic

socialization agents (other than TV) 1,3-6,10,21-22,23

socialization process, definition of 1,22

socially handicapped children - see Relationships, problematic, Social situation/milieu/background, Socio-economic status

society 2,7,22-25

socio-economic status 3,7,18, 19,20,21 - see also Social situation/milieu/ background

space, discontinuities in, in programmes 16

spy-thrillers 2

status as a motive for TV-viewing 4,6,8,24

supervision of children's TV-viewing 4-6

switch on the set oneself 4

talk about programmes - see Discussion about programmes

teachers 6,
teachers' TV-behaviour 6

tempo in programmes 11,16

thinking 1,3,14,16,24 - see also Cognitive development, Comprehension of programmes/ information, Knowledge, Recollection of information

time, discontinuities in, in programmes 16

time-slots - see Broadcast times

TV-behaviour, adults' 1,2,3,5,6, 7,11,23,24 - see also TV-behaviour, parents', TV-behaviour, teachers'

TV-behaviour, parents' 3-8,10, 12,13,18,19,24

TV-behaviour, peers' 4,5,6,24

TV-behaviour, sisters' and brothers' 5,19

TV-behaviour, teachers' 6

TV-behaviour in day-care centers 5

TV-peak 1,3,6

TV-sets, possession of, in day-care centers 5

TV-sets, possession of, in nursery schools 5

TV-viewing, children's 1-8,12,14,15, 19,25
amount of TV-viewing 1-8 - see also High and low TV-consumers
direction of TV-viewing 2-8 - see also Interest in programmes/ items in programmes, Programme preferences
heavy TV-consumers - see High and low TV-consumers
high and low TV-consumers 1-2,7,8, 12,15,19,25
start of TV-viewing 1
TV-viewing alone/together with someone - see Receiver situation
TV-viewing at other places than at home 5,6
TV-viewing in the evenings 2,4

two-channel system 2,6

understanding of programmes - see Comprehension of programmes/information

unfamiliar forms 11-12

unfamiliar information 12,17 - see also Experience

unprivileged children - see Relationships, problematic, Social situation/milieu/background, Socio-economic status

USA 2,13,19

values 7,11-15,17,19,22-25

violence in films/programmes 7,8,10, 12-13

violence research 10,12-13

violent actions 10.13

vocabulary - see Language

war and peace, the conceptions of 21

weather reports 22

Western countries/Western world 1,2,13

Western Europe 2

Westerns 2,9,12

wishes (generally) 24

wishful identification - see Identification

world, the, outside home and school 21-25